

Speaker 1:

I was motivated to join this district attorney's office because I saw it as an opportunity to make an impact on the community that I serve. Court actors often think about mental illness in terms of one's capacity to stand trial as opposed to the things that may have impacted or led someone to commit a crime. Before this serious crime was committed, were there opportunities that we missed, that were missed in other systems that feed into the criminal justice system, be it healthcare, be it education, be it housing?

I think that what brings us to the point of even considering those alternatives is at the end of accountability for commission of a criminal offense, is the answer to that, will that change the behavior? There are times where it's important for our justice system and prosecutors can be a vehicle of that to take that person out of the community for a while through incarceration. But at the end of that option, you ask yourself, "Will this actually change that person's behavior?" Sometimes it will. Very often it will not. Either through probation, either through diversion, either through incarceration, plus some other's type of programming, there exists the possibility of the changing of behavior.

There has been a growing movement among prosecutors to define that as being trauma informed. In order to do that effectively, it requires me being in tune with voices of empathy, voices of accountability. Thousand-page volumes of court cases aren't only going to tell me so much about the living, breathing people that I'm going to be interacting with on a daily basis. I cannot underscore the importance of being able to communicate and listen to the everyday people that you're going to be encountering in this work.